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THE MURDER OF TROTSKY AND THE FIGHT AGAINST STALINISM

LENINIST LEAGUE, U.S.A.
P.O. Box 67 Sta. D.
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Leninist League

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By J.C.Hunter

 HE assassination of Trotsky has evoked from Cannon and Shachtman reiterations of the claim that Trotsky led a Leninist fight against Stalinism. Superficially, this contention is strengthened by the fact that to all appearances Trotsky was assassinated by a hireling of Stalin.

Revolutionary workers must evaluate their leaders in terms of Marxian science, not in terms of sentiment or emotional attachment. Great leaders who turn traitor must be rejected and their renegacy exposed to the entire working class. The toilers cannot win liberation by sunning themselves in the achievements of past generations of revolutionaries. Present realities must be squarely and concretely faced. Kautsky, Plekhanov, as well as Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin were once revolutionaries, but mulling over this fact will not aid the workers when such leaders betray them in one way or another. In the present day life of the workers, the treachery of such leaders overshadows all their revolutionary deeds, for their treachery is present, while their revolutionary deeds are past.

A basic fact which revolutionary workers must keep in mind is this:- the fact that a person or even a whole tendency is being persecuted does not in itself prove that that person or tendency is a genuine opposition to the persecutor. At times the Social-democrats are ferociously persecuted by the bourgeoisie, as for example, when the capitalists institute a fascist form of their dictatorship. Nevertheless, social democracy is an agent of imperialism. Sometimes, the reformist trade union bureaucrats meet with attacks from the bosses. Nevertheless, the reformists are, as Lenin taught, the agents of imperialism in the camp of labor. It has often happened that the fascists were persecuted by the bourgeoisie. In 1923, Hitler was almost killed by the bourgeois police and soldiery. Will any revolutionary worker allow himself to be deceived even for a second into imagining that the fascists are in any way a threat to the rule of the capitalists? It is a well-known fact that the Stalinist bureaucrats have often been, and still are persecuted by the bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, these bandits are unswerving betrayers of the toilers and thus are valuable assistants to the capitalists. Trotsky's assassin may be thrown into prison by the bourgeoisie. Is this cutthroat to be considered a danger to the capitalists?

Stalin also has persecuted and murdered many persons who were in no way a genuine political opposition to him. Indeed, most of the leading figures in the Party such as Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek, Piatakov, Yagoda who were assassinated by Stalin were actually his collaborators.

What has history to tell of Trotsky's real role in the rise of Stalinism?

Stalinist opportunism began as a species of renegacy on the part of a section of the top leaders of the victorious Bolshevik Party. Corrupted by the great power they had held since the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, certain leaders of the R.C.P. began to think no longer in terms of using their power in the interests of the toilers, but of entrenching themselves permanently in positions of bureaucratic power and privilege. Stalinism, as this renegacy came to be known, began as a form of careerism in the workers state.

Naturally, the renegade leaders had to disguise their criminal designs. Their machinations to usurp power in Party and State had to take the form of a conspiracy, else they would have been wiped out by the indignant toilers who would have had little patience with known renegades. Masking their plot under a falseface of "Bolshevism", the traitors soon transformed the Soviet Republic into a hotbed of scheming and maneuvering for offices, privileges and bribes. From being a center of world revolution during Lenin's leadership, the first workers state, while retaining its socialized economic basis, was transformed by Stalinism into a center of counter-revolutionary plots and machinations.

The organizational center of this conspiracy to usurp power was Stalin. Boosted by Zinoviev, one of his partners at the start of the conspiracy, to the specially-created, all-powerful post of General Secretary, Stalin rapidly gathered around him thousands of willing bootlickers who, in return for the privileges granted to them, stood by the renegade leaders through thick and thin. In this manner, as a hand-picked and deliberately constructed political basis for the treacherous plotters, there came into existence the Stalinist bureaucracy.

By the end of 1922, Lenin had already noticed the bureaucratic turn that Stalin had taken in his role as a leader. Characteristically, Lenin prepared to give battle to Stalinism. Trotsky himself indicates this in many places in his writings. For example: "Already in 1922, during a brief improvement in his health, Lenin, horrified at the threatening growth of bureaucratism, was preparing a struggle against the faction of Stalin, which had made itself the axis of the party machine as a first step toward capturing the machinery of state." (The Revolution Betrayed, p. 99. My emphasis-J.C.K.) The Stalinist machinations in the Party, aimed at usurping power in the State, manifested themselves in this early period most markedly in certain of the independent Soviet Republics, chiefly Georgia. Here Stalin inaugurated a veritable pogrom against the local Bolshevik leaders in a desperate effort to install creatures of his own choosing. As Trotsky testifies in many of his writings, Lenin undertook to defend the Georgian Bolsheviks against Stalinist bureaucratism. Trotsky also relates that for the XII Party Congress scheduled to meet in April 1923, Lenin prepared voluminous documents in which he presented the case of the toilers against Stalinism. The XII Party Congress was chosen by Lenin as the battleground on which Stalinism was to be annihilated. Trotsky wrote: "Lenin was now preparing not only to remove Stalin from his post of general secretary, but to disqualify him before the party as well.... He was systematically preparing to deliver at the twelfth congress a blow at Stalin as personifying bureaucracy, the mutual shielding among officials, arbitrary rule and general rudeness." (My Life, pp. 480-1).

From such statements as these, it might be inferred by the uninformed or mislead worker that at the XII Congress Trotsky carried out Lenin's line against Stalin, (Lenin being too ill to appear at this congress.) Indeed, Lenin himself was given the impression that Trotsky intended to combat Stalinism. On the eve of the XII Congress, Lenin held discussions with Trotsky in which the latter represented himself as standing on Leninist grounds. Lenin entrusted Trotsky with the battle against Stalinism, and in line with this, gave Trotsky the necessary documentary material to be presented in the name of Lenin and Trotsky at the XII Congress.

In actuality, however, Trotsky had set himself an entirely different policy with respect to Stalin and his fellow conspirators. This policy is proved by history to be one of cooperation with the Stalin clique, of shielding Stalinism against the workers and of acting in bloc with the Stalinist plotters. While Trotsky assured Lenin that he would fight against Stalin and his henchmen, Trotsky gave the Stalinist plotters quite the opposite assurances. On March 6, 1923, i.e., on the eve of the XII Congress at which Trotsky had promised Lenin to carry on the war against Stalin, Trotsky assured Kamenev, another original partner of Stalin in the plot to usurp power, "Remember, and tell others that the last thing I want is to start a fight at the congress for any changes in organization. I am for preserving the status quo." (My Life, p. 485. My emphasis - J.C.H.) The status quo, to the immeasurable detriment of the toilers, was a Stalinist status quo. Lenin was at the time desperately ill. The workers at large knew nothing of the conspiracy formed by the renegade leaders. Trotsky was the key figure in the situation. Either to go with Lenin — or to go with the Stalinist plotters, these were the alternatives Trotsky faced. In his own words, he had indicated which alternative he chose. "I am for preserving the status quo." These words are unmistakable in their import. But Trotsky was even more specific with respect to his attitude toward Stalin and his clique. "I am against removing Stalin, and expelling Ordzhonikidze, and displacing Dzerzhinsky from the commissariat of transport." (Ibid., p. 486.)* These words were music in the ears of Kamenev who knew of Lenin's preparations against Stalin and was naturally shaken by them. "Kamenev gave a sigh of relief," Trotsky records (Ibid. p. 486). There is no question but that Trotsky by his assurances took a load off the mind of this worried Stalinist conspirator.

Its path cleared by Trotsky, the Stalinist gang went ahead decisively with its preparations for the XII Congress. Had Trotsky chosen to do so, during the period of the eve of the XII Congress when his power was enormous, when the Stalin-Zinoviev-Kamenev clique were as pigmies in comparison with Trotsky, when a mere threat of exposure by Lenin put them in a frenzy of fear, Trotsky could easily have destroyed the Stalinist plotters — even without the aid of Lenin. Let Trotsky speak for himself: "And what is more, I have no doubt that if I had come forward on the eve of the twelfth congress in the spirit of a 'bloc of Lenin and Trotsky' against the Stalinist bureaucracy, I should have been victorious even if Lenin had taken no direct part in the struggle." (Ibid. p. 481. My emphasis - J.C.H.) But Trotsky did not "come forward in the spirit of a bloc of Lenin and Trotsky." The victory over Stalinism which was in his hands he forfeited in favor of a bloc with Stalinism.

At the XII Congress, Trotsky continued his pro-Stalinist game. He voted with the Stalin clique to suppress all of Lenin's anti-Stalinist documents. All of the fraudulent resolutions advanced by the Stalin gang in order to palm itself off as the inheritor of the Leninist tradition were voted for by Trotsky. Of his knowledge of the Stalinist plot he uttered not a word. Trotsky utterly and completely sabotaged Lenin's line against Stalinism. Naturally, the Stalin gang was in ecstasy at the smooth way in which they engineered the XII Congress. The battleground which Lenin had chosen for the death-blow against Stalinism was converted by Stalin, Zinoviev and Kamenev, with Trotsky's cooperation, into the field of the complete victory of Stalinism. The Stalinist press gloated: "At the XII Congress the Party strikingly demonstrated its unshakable unity,

* Ordzhonikidze had enacted the role of a common thug, introducing the strong arm technique which came to characterize Stalinism. Lenin, indignant at Ordzhonikidze's hooliganism, demanded his expulsion from the Party. Dzerzhinsky, also an ally of Stalin, had carried out the Stalinization of the commissariat of transport. Trotsky's shielding of these henchmen of Stalin's falls in line with his entire role in the Stalinist conspiracy.

its inner growth and the growth of its influence amongst the masses. Comrade Stalin was right when he said: 'Comrade Lenin reared the Party during his whole life and has brought it to greatness.' All the resolutions of the Party Congress were passed unanimously." (*Die Internationale*, June 1, 1923, p. 325.) Thus the Stalinist swindlers, hypocritically singing praises for the Lenin whom they were betraying, donned the mask of "Leninism" and deceived the toilers. Behind the back of the sick Lenin, Stalinism at the XII Congress was continued as the official policy of the now degenerated "Bolshevik" Party.

While the Stalinist scheme to usurp power proceeded without interruption in its basic aspects, due primarily to Trotsky's lining up with the plotters, it began to take on new overtones. The chief one was a process of centralizing power in the hands of Stalin-Zinoviev-Kamenev by eliminating the other leaders of the Party. The first outstanding leader within the conspiracy to be broken down and wiped out was Trotsky. There developed a plot within the general conspiracy. The above named trio, (or Troika, as they came to be known), passed on to the path of framing up their collaborator, Trotsky, by concocting a fake polemic against him. He was accused of holding various theories which were said to be anti-Leninist. Under the cover of this cooked-up "theoretical polemic", the Stalin gang blackened Trotsky in the eyes of the masses.

Unable to come out against the Stalin clique, as Lenin had proposed, because of his betrayal of the Leninist line and his organic attachment to the Stalinist clique, Trotsky simply kept silent in the face of the barrage that was let loose against him. To reveal the whole Stalinist conspiracy in truthful terms, meant to expose his own duplicity. Despite Trotsky's silence, so convenient to the conspirators, (or better, because they know that he had to maintain silence), the Stalin gang continued to hound Trotsky ceaselessly. Unable to get rid of him all at one stroke, Stalin gave Trotsky various minor jobs in some of the Soviet institutions. But, "The Stalin apparatus followed on my heels," writes Trotsky (*My Life*, p. 519). Toward the end of 1925 and in 1926, Trotsky finally tried to get out of politics entirely, to win what he called a "political holiday." But the Stalinist machine never relented in its drive against him. "My attempt to win a political holiday for myself was patently a failure," Trotsky confessed. (*Ibid.* p. 520.) This picture of a supposed "Bolshevik" trying to win "a political holiday" is something which revolutionary workers who imagine that Trotsky conducted a Leninist fight against Stalinism will do well to contemplate.

At the time Trotsky was trying to slide out of politics, Stalinism was already thoroughly entrenched in the Soviet Union and within the international proletariat. For the oppressed toilers throughout the world there was not and, of course, could not be any such thing as a "political holiday." The Stalinist machine, to protect itself in its position of usurped bureaucratic power, acted time and again to prevent any successful proletarian revolution. Proletarian liberation was what the Stalin machine feared above everything, for such liberation could mean only the eventual destruction of Stalinism. The Stalinist plotters had already in 1923 betrayed the German proletariat into accepting a coalition with the treacherous social-democracy. This had succeeded in stifling the developing German revolution and thus in saving the Stalinist bureaucracy. In 1925 and thereafter, the Stalin clique was working with might and main to bring the growing Chinese revolution to ruin. Opening the path for the Chinese bourgeoisie to drown the revolutionary toilers in a sea of blood, the Stalinist usurpers again crushed the danger of an upset by a successful proletarian revolution. The spread of such revolution over the world and into the Soviet Union they recognized would be a fearful menace to their bureaucratic power and privilege. For the masses, clearly, there was no "political holiday." The sort of "fight" put up against the Stalinist monster by a man who — because of his own complicity in the conspiracy — was forced into a position of hankering after a "political holiday" may well be imagined.

While Trotsky was angling for a "political holiday" and in general kept silent about the Stalinist plot, as far as his aiding Stalinism was concerned. Trotsky took no "holiday." Trotsky's actions in connection with the suppression of Lenin's Testament symbolize his true role in the Stalinist plot. The Testament was part of Lenin's preparations for the war against Stalin and his renegade tendency. These preparations, though sabotaged and undermined by the whole treacherous leadership of the R.C.P., including Trotsky, continued to haunt the Stalinist conspirators and to inspire them with fear. Any leakage of these preparations to the ears of the masses would be a grave danger to the plotters. Hence, when in 1925 Max Eastman, although not a Leninist, happened to get wind of Lenin's anti-Stalinist documents and to spread his information amongst the masses, the Stalin clique took immediate steps to squelch any development that Eastman's revelations might make possible. Even prior to the actual publication of Eastman's exposures in his book, "Since Lenin Died," Eastman had been warned by one of the conspirators to keep quiet about Lenin's Testament. Who was this conspirator? None other than Trotsky himself. Eastman, before publishing his revelations, met Trotsky accidentally and told him that he knew about Lenin's Testament. Trotsky answered him in a manner in keeping with his part in the Stalinist plot. Eastman reports:- "Subsequently I met him (Trotsky) for a moment accidentally. I told him then that I knew about 'The Testament of Lenin,' and he told me to regard whatever I knew as an 'absolute secret'." (Since Lenin Died, p. 26, footnote.) It is clear that Trotsky's reaction in this momentary, accidental meeting with Eastman could be the result only of Trotsky's policy, which was to cooperate with the Stalin gang in concealing Lenin's anti-Stalinist documents. Obviously, no one forced Trotsky, in this brief, accidental meeting with Eastman to tell him to keep quiet about the Testament. If Trotsky were an honest revolutionary he could very easily have said to Eastman: Go ahead, tell the workers about the Testament. But this was not Trotsky's reaction. His act was that of a person tied to the Stalinist conspirators. Eastman, however, failed to conform to Trotsky's conspiratorial ruling and published his information about Lenin's Testament. In line with his previous move to squelch Eastman, Trotsky leaped into the breach for the Stalin gang and slandered Eastman's truthful revelations as malicious lies:

"Comrade Lenin has not left any 'will'..... All talk with regard to a concealed or mutilated 'will' is nothing but a despicable lie.....It suffices to ask: 'If we assume that the malicious characterization of our leading party comrades given by Eastman is only partly correct, how is it possible that this Party should have emerged from long years of illegal struggle, how could it stand at the head of masses of millions, carried through the greatest revolution of the world, to further the formation of revolutionary parties in other countries.' There is no sincere worker who will believe in the picture painted by Eastman." (L. Trotsky, Inprecorr, September 3, 1925, pp. 1005, 1006.)

Eastman's characterization of the Stalin clique as a pack of plotters and frauds was perfectly true. These "leading Party comrades," as Trotsky called them, were scoundrels, as Trotsky well knew. By this time, toward the end of 1925, they were so deep in criminal counter-revolution that a tribunal and a firing squad were their only finish if they were found out by the revolutionary toilers. But Trotsky told the workers that Eastman's characterization of the Stalin gang of political bandits was "malicious," that "there is no sincere worker who will believe in the picture painted by Eastman." This protection of the Stalinist conspirators by Trotsky was, of course, invaluable to them, for at that time Trotsky was still a man of enormous prestige and his word counted heavily with the revolutionary toilers throughout the world.

In a private letter to one of his followers, Muralov, Trotsky in later years explained why he had so viciously slandered Eastman. The real essence of this explanation is to be found in the sentence: "In any case, my then statement on Eastman can be understood only as an integral part of our then line toward conciliation and peacemaking." (New International, Nov. 1934, p. 125. My emphasis - J.C.H.) Protection of Stalinist ronegacy as an "integral part" of a policy of conciliating and peace^{making} with the Stalinist plotters — of this crime Trotsky stands virtually self-accused.

Relying on the confusion of deceived workers about Trotsky's real role, Cannon's Socialist Appeal distorted the truth, declaring that Stalin's motive for the murder of Trotsky was "mad thirst for revenge against the fearless and incorruptible fighter who had exposed and pilloried Stalin before the world." (Aug. 24, 1940, p. 1.) And Shachtman's Labor Action writes concerning Trotsky: "In the period of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution, his voice and his pen remained alive to explain and to teach a new generation of young revolutionaries to fight against the decaying order of capitalism and for the new socialist society of universal freedom for the masses of our planet." (Aug. 26, 1940, p. 1. My emphasis - J.C.H.) Thus do those political swindlers, careerist leeches who attached themselves to Trotsky, peddle the lie that in this epoch of Stalinism Trotsky was the Leninist light which guided the toilers. So mighty was Trotsky's voice "against Stalinism," that as late as October 1927 in a letter addressed to the Stalinist fakers in the Bureau of Party History, Trotsky was constrained to make the remark: "Hundreds of comrades have asked me again and again why I continue silent in the face of a perfectly outrageous falsification, directed against me, of the history of the October Revolution and the history of our party." (The Stalin School of Falsification, p. 1. My emphasis - J.C.H.) Indeed, many honest workers simply could not understand Trotsky's "strange" silence in the face of the frame-up barrage let loose against him by Stalin and his gang. These workers did not know that Trotsky had set himself the policy of establishing a bloc with the Troika, a collective bureaucratic usurpation of power. They imagined that he was perfectly free to fight Stalinism, for of Trotsky's betrayal of Lenin's line to remove Stalin they knew nothing. In this respect, these workers of the earlier period of the rise of Stalinism resemble the present-day followers of Cannon and Shachtman. It goes without saying that the careerist bureaucrats, Cannon and Shachtman, for self-protection, take care not to shed any light on this matter. They will continue spreading the Trotskyist fraud about "the fearless and incorruptible fighter who had exposed and pilloried Stalin before the world."

Again and again Trotsky, as well as many other bureaucrats who had been kicked out of power by Stalin and so were transformed into "oppositionists" by Stalin, emitted loud yelps of loyalty to the Stalinist Central Committee and the Stalinist Party. Trotsky trampled on any tendency to form factions against Stalin whenever the Russian Communist workers showed such a tendency. The Stalinist "Party," naturally, forbade any oppositional factions. Hence, Trotsky and his fellow broken-down leaders, declared: "We consider it our duty to carry out the decisions of the Party regarding the impermissibility of fractional activity..... We call for the immediate dissolution of all fractional groupings which have been formed round the views of the Opposition." (Statement of Zinoviev, Trotsky, Kamenev, Piatakov, Sokolnikov and Jevdokimov made on Oct. 16, 1926. Imprecorr, Oct. 21, 1926, p. 1173.) Some time later, Trotsky affirmed his loyal pro-Stalinist declaration of October 16, 1926: "We will fulfill to the very end of the obligations undertaken by us in the declaration of Oct. 16, 1926." (Die Fahne des Kommunismus, Jan. 1927, p. 7.) On December 3, 1927, Trotsky and a whole host of other former leading bureaucrats told the workers: "There are no programmatic differences between us and the Party." (Reported in Imprecorr, Jan. 12, 1928.) The "Party", i.e., the machine of hand-picked flunkies devoted to Stalin in return for the privileges and

bribes he gave them, had as its real "programme" to preserve and enhance the Stalinist bureaucracy with its policy of usurpation of power, of massacring the revolutionary workers in the Soviet Union and of strangling the international toilers through the treacherous line of Stalin's "Comintern." Thinking workers will understand the real meaning of Trotsky's declaration of having "no programmatic differences" with such a "Party."

Sometime later, Trotsky gave something of an account of his activity in the period of Stalinism. His own summary is as follows: "To the last possibility I avoided the struggle." (What Happened and How, p. 34.) While this statement of his role in the Stalinist development is in sharp contradiction to the deceptions he later spread and to those now being spread by Cannon-Shachtman, it by no means is a wholly accurate picture. The basic fact of the matter is that Trotsky's policy was one not of "avoiding a struggle" but of positively collaborating with the Stalinist plotters.

Beginning with the latter part of 1923, as the intensity of the Stalinist centralization of power increased and as power was more and more torn from his hands, Trotsky increasingly camouflaged his support to the Stalin clique with what looked like "criticism" to the uninformed workers. If in the midst of the fierce Stalinist attacks, Trotsky had simply continued to give open, undisguised support to Stalin, the resulting spectacle would have been a fantastically incongruous one and Trotsky would have completely lost face. Trotsky had to work out some sort of device by which he could continue to support the system of renegacy to which he was tied with unbreakable historical chains and at the same time to appear as an "oppositionist." This Trotsky did in the following way: first, he continued to conceal the fact that Stalinism was a counter-revolutionary conspiracy to usurp power in the workers state, that the Stalinist bureaucrats were conscious criminals who feared and hence strove to prevent revolution, a threat to their bureaucratic power and privilege. Then, he took the load from Stalin's "theoretical" noise and told the workers that the Stalinist bureaucrats were "confused revolutionaries" who based themselves on a false "theory" (socialism in one country) which caused them to mislead the toilers unintentionally. And finally, he continued to shout for support to Stalin's "Comintern" under the guise of "correcting" Stalinism, vociferously damning even the idea of forming a new international. Trotsky's "opposition" consisted of those three fraudulent elements: (1) concealment of the deliberately criminal, renegade nature of Stalinism; (2) false attribution of Stalinism's counter-revolutionary policy to well-meaning "confusion" based on a bad "theory"; (3) "critical" support to Stalinism's international organizations. The upshot was that the subjectively anti-Stalinist workers throughout the world who gathered around the figure of Trotsky, imagining him to be a genuinely anti-Stalinist tendency, were blinded with the chimera of "correcting" the bloody butcher Stalin and his bribed henchmen like Thaelman, Lovestone, Browder, Cachin, Mao Tse-Tung, and were tricked into supporting the murder machines headed by these gangsters. This period in which Trotsky proclaimed himself a "loyal faction" of the "Comintern" continued up to the victory of Hitler in January 1933.

The victory of Hitler was clearly due primarily to the treachery of Stalinism. In consequence, after 1933, the "loyal faction" method of deceiving his followers into supporting Stalinism was obviously useless to Trotsky. After the horrible fascist landslide in Germany in 1933, not even the most confused Trotskyite worker would much longer accept Trotsky's exhortations to vote for Thaelmann, Foster and similar scoundrels. Hence, Trotsky adopted his "4th International" device through which in a different form he continued his line of supporting the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The launching of the "4th International" coincided with the unfolding of

the third ultra-rightist zigzag of the Stalinized "Comintern," the counter-revolutionary maneuver known as the "Popular Front." This Rightist zigzag was used to cover up the Stalinist betrayal in Germany. With this treacherous line Stalin later staved off proletarian revolution throughout the world and especially in France and Spain where it was most imminent. Adapting his policy as always to that of Stalin, Trotsky began through his "4th International" to give support to Stalin's "democracy versus fascism" fakery. Naturally, in keeping with his "anti-Stalinist" front, Trotsky's support to Stalin's "Popular Front" treachery was given a "critical" twist — always "critical"! But, the essence of Trotsky's line was to be seen in his proposal of a Blum-Cachin Ministry in France. (See Whithor France, p. 44.) In France such a social-democratic-Stalinist government did not materialize, despite Trotsky's exhortations. But in Spain a few years later its image,

a Negrin-Hernandez government appeared on the scene. It received Trotsky's support, "with criticism," — always "with criticism"! And this government was successful in engineering the victory of Franco. In France, the "Popular Front" government, even without the participation of Stalinist bureaucrats in any Ministry, succeeded in utterly crushing the upsurge of the workers. This support—"with criticism" — to the third ultra-rightist zigzag of Stalin's "Comintern" constituted the essence of the continuation, through the "4th International" technique, of Trotsky's support to Stalinism, support he had been giving in one form or another since the origin of this form of renegacy.

Along with this support to Stalin's "Comintern" maneuvers, there ran in Trotsky's line direct support to the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. This took the form of palming off the Stalinist bureaucracy as having some kind of a "progressive function" in defending the Soviet Union. Concealing the fact that the Stalinist bureaucracy can only undermine and bring on the destruction of what remains of the workers state, Trotsky, on the grounds of the mythical "progressive function" which he concocted, urged the workers to "sustain Stalin and his bureaucracy" (The Case of Leon Trotsky, p. 282).

This, in brief outline, is the career of the man to whom Cannon refers as "the fearless and incorruptible fighter who had exposed and pilloried Stalin before the world" and whose voice and pen, according to Shachtman, remained alive in the epoch of Stalinism to teach a new generation how to fight for proletarian liberation!

If one does not know the true story of the Stalinist conspiracy, it might be thought that Trotsky's assassination surely proves that he represented a real threat to Stalinism, that Trotsky's political tendency was Leninist in character. But, if the true history of the Stalinist renegacy is known, and especially Trotsky's part in it, it will be discerned that the very opposite is the case. According to Trotsky, the basis of Stalinism's counter-revolutionary acts was the "theory" of socialism in one country. History proves, however, that it was not a "theory" which gave rise to the hideous bloodbath in which Stalinism came to drown the toiling masses. It was the Stalinist plot to usurp power in the workers state. It was the criminality of the Stalin gang which led to its transformation into a veritable monster. The bloodiness and butchery of Stalinism arose from its consciously counter-revolutionary character, its fear and hatred of revolutionary advances on the part of the toilers, its need to crush the masses in order to protect and enhance its usurped power. Criminal assaults on the toilers must arise from interests which are contrary to those of the masses. These interests in the case of the Stalinist bureaucracy were its power and privilege stolen by conspiratory usurpation from the workers.

When Trotsky raised the question of whether Stalin poisoned Lenin he came

very close to indicating the real nature of the origin of Stalinism. Stalin feared Lenin. Had Lenin recovered his health, he would have led in person an attack against the whole Stalinist clique of plotters. No honest Party leader had any reason to fear Lenin, regardless of what false theory that leader may have held. At the beginning of 1923, moreover, when, according to Trotsky's intimations, Stalin was already contemplating murdering Lenin, the "theory" of socialism in one country had not appeared on the Stalinist scene. This "theory" was an outgrowth of Stalinist criminality. The "theory" was part of the fake polemics which Stalin and his aids cooked up to frame Trotsky and wipe him out of power. It was part of the ideological dust which the Stalinists threw into the eyes of the masses to blind them to the conscious renegacy of their leaders. Stalinism is not based on any "theory." It is based on a specific crime, the effort to usurp power in the workers state.

Stalinist opportunism is an entirely new phenomenon in history. Careerism in bourgeois states is well known. All bourgeois states are bureaucratic. But careerism in a workers state of the sort let loose by the Stalinist conspiracy is something which no Marxist ever anticipated. Marx and Engels wrote about the workers state in a purely general, theoretical manner. Lenin was the first of the three founders of Marxism to meet the germinating Stalinism face to face. Lenin was the first to attempt to give battle to Stalinism. If what Trotsky wrote about Stalin's poisoning of Lenin is true, then Lenin paid with his life for his effort to combat Stalinism. The battle against Stalinism is today the direct continuation of Lenin's fight for the revolutionary line in the ranks of the proletariat.

Millions of honest workers have paid with their lives because they have been prevented from fighting Stalinism. For the dishonest victims of Stalinism, — and there have been many such — the toilers need feel no regret. But the proletarian vanguard must rally for a genuine fight against Stalinism lest the entire international working class vanguard be destroyed in the present period because of Stalinist treachery.

There is no hope whatsoever of proletarian liberation as long as Stalinism retains the possibility of controlling the decisive sections of the proletariat. Before the workers can free themselves from the bourgeoisie, they must rid themselves of this pseudo-Bolshevik, Stalinist cancer. Under the present conditions of complete political paralysis of the international proletariat, the present period of history is rapidly moving to a finish which will be incalculably disastrous for the workers, unless all pseudo-Bolshevism is exposed and wiped out. A turn toward revolutionary successes for the toilers depends entirely on the ousting of Stalinism with all its "opposition" branches from the proletarian vanguard and the creation of a new Bolshevik International.

ALL IDEAS OF BUILDING A NEW INTERNATIONAL ALONG ANY LINE BUT THAT OF DESTROYING STALINISM ARE SIMPLY A TRAP WHICH WILL LEAD THE ANTI-STALINIST WORKERS TO DESTRUCTION.

Such a trap is precisely what Trotsky and his henchmen like Cannon and Shachtman placed in the path of the workers. Here is how they paint Stalinism before the eyes of the workers: "The Stalinist issue can be handled, but it can only be handled as what it is, an incidental (!!) obstacle in the fight for the program that workers and farmers need." (New International, March 1939, p. 78. My emphasis - J.C.H.) An incidental obstacle! In the lurid light of the Stalinist betrayal of the millions of toilers of Russia, China, Germany, France, Spain and all other countries, how gruesome and criminal those words sound!

Following Trotsky, Cannon and Shachtman (and we may include in this category Oehler and Stamm) to prevent a struggle against Stalinism, misdirect the anti-Stalinist workers by orienting them to the backward masses, i.e., those who have not yet broken even with the bourgeois parties. But the decisive section of the proletariat is that which has already broken subjectively with the bourgeois parties and which considers itself revolutionary. This decisive section, ever since the rise of Stalinism, has fallen into the clutches of this renegade tendency, consistently mistaking it for genuine Bolshevism. Especially in revolutionary crises, the advanced workers break with bourgeois parties by the millions — only to fall into the Stalinist trap. The Leninist orientation is toward the advanced, i.e., the predominantly class-conscious, Bolshevik-minded workers, to win them away from the Stalinist traitors and the pseudo-anti-Stalinist tendencies and with these workers to create the new Bolshevik movement. But any worker who — following Trotsky and his henchmen — considers Stalinism "an incidental obstacle" or a force having some kind of a "progressive function" will never succeed in creating a movement which will annihilate the Stalinist scourge. No, Stalinism is not an incidental obstacle. Stalinism is the main danger in the camp of the proletarian vanguard. Unless this opportunist menace is eradicated from the proletarian vanguard, there is not even the slightest possibility of liberation of the masses from bourgeois oppression.

Cannon and Shachtman have the self-protective need to conceal Trotsky's real role in the rise of Stalinism. More, they have the need to prevent the overthrow of Stalinism. This overthrow will take place only if the advanced toilers are armed with a clear understanding of the origin and rise of Stalinism as well as of its method of operation (the two being organically connected). Such an understanding will come only ^{when} the true role of Trotsky becomes known. Furthermore, the real character of all the Cannons, Fosters, Lovestones, Browders, Thaelmanns, Cachins, Thorezes, Shachtmans, who for careerist reasons attached themselves to one aspect or another of the Stalinist system, will also become known. In the final reckoning all these careerists will have to answer for the rivers of working class blood for which in one way or another they are responsible. The overthrow of Stalinism is a danger to these opportunists. This is the fundamental fact which must be in the mind of the worker who hears the glib promises of Cannon or Shachtman to lead a struggle against Stalinism which they describe as an "incidental obstacle." A genuine war to destroy Stalinism in order to achieve proletarian liberation from capitalism can be led only by honest workers who have no careerist attachments of any sort to any aspect of the Stalinist system. To fight Stalinism, one's hands must be clean of Stalinist treachery. An entirely new revolutionary leadership must be created.

As in every crisis of history, the revolutionary class is presented with an "either-or." Today, it is either destroy Stalinism or be destroyed. There is no middle ground. Preliminary to a direct and major assault on Stalinism, however, there is much work that must be done. The already subjectively anti-Stalinist workers must break from their present false leaders, in the first instance from Cannon and Shachtman. The entire role of these careerists must be evaluated in terms of Trotsky's entire role in the Stalinist conspiracy. Unless this issue is cleared up, the anti-Stalinist workers will retain one piece or another of Trotskyist falsification. As long as the illusion that Trotsky fought Stalin has not been destroyed in the mind of the most advanced workers, then one form or another of Trotskyist deception will remain there to mislead them. Scientific, Marxist investigation of the entire history of the rise of Stalinism is a prime requirement for those workers who already understand the need for a new revolutionary party. Such an investigation will reveal to them the exact nature of Trotsky's renegade role. This alone can clear their mind of Trotskyist deceptions. This alone can function to set

set them on the genuine Leninist path of struggle against the Stalinist cancer.

Followers of Trotsky to one extent or another, will feel discouraged by Trotsky's assassination. They will feel that they have lost a great leader. Some of them will feel that they have to make a thorough political investigation of people like Cannon, Goldman, Morrow, Weber, Wright, Hansen. Perhaps they were accepting these people as leaders mainly because behind them there stood the figure of Trotsky. Now that Trotsky physically is out of the picture, it becomes necessary to think over the leadership of his American representatives, such workers may feel. But such workers will be making a grave error if they imagine that these leaders can be evaluated apart from Trotsky. They all have to be judged in terms of the line they gave — and still give — to the workers, which is Trotsky's line. If the fact is known that Trotsky's role in the Stalinist conspiracy was that of a collaborator of the Stalin clique, that Trotsky's line constituted ever since 1921-1922 one form of support or another to conscious Stalinist renegacy, then to determine the nature of his henchmen is a matter of little difficulty. But if this fact is not known, if the workers try to evaluate these henchmen of Trotsky's aside from the whole Trotskyist role in the Stalinist development, then they will easily be deceived into siding with one or another of the cliques which exist in the Trotskyist movement.

It may be expected that in the not so far distant future there will develop splits in the Cannon organization. The leaders of this "Party" are a gang of careerists who hate each other fiercely, and are jealous of each other's standing in the organization. Quite likely, an effort will be launched by one or another of the cliques to wipe out the rivals. This struggle for bureaucratic power will be disguised in typical Stalinist manner — with a cooked up "theoretical polemic." The case of the Cannon-Shachtman squabble which recently boiled over was one of those clique fights. And characteristically, it was given a "polemical" cover. In order not to be trapped by another one of these "polemics," it is above all essential to understand the entire Stalinist development, and in the first instance Trotsky's part therein.

These are the true prospects for the workers in the various Trotskyist organizations. To fight Stalinism, it is first necessary to understand and break with Trotsky's tendency. All other paths are those of illusion and defeat.

FOR A LENINIST INVESTIGATION AND EXPOSURE OF THE TRUE ROLE OF TROTSKY IN THE STALINIST CONSPIRACY.

BREAK CLEANLY WITH EVERY VARIETY OF CAREERIST FRAUD REGARDLESS OF WHAT ALLURING LABEL IT MARCHES UNDER.

HOLD ALL THE PSEUDO-BOLSHEVIK DECEIVERS TO ACCOUNTS FOR THE DEFEAT AND RUINE THEY HAVE BROUGHT ON THE TOILERS.

FOR A NEW LENINIST INTERNATIONAL, CREATED THROUGH A GENUINE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE ENTIRE STALINIST SYSTEM.

New York City
August 24, 1940.